

WAR LITERATURE SOCIETY.

ADDRESS BY

The Hon. W. A. HOLMAN

Premier of New South Wales

ENTITLED:

War Knowledge in Australia

DELIVERED AT

The Inaugural Meeting of the Society
on 23rd September, 1918.



SOME VICTIMS OF GERMAN MILITARISM.



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“WAR KNOWLEDGE IN AUSTRALIA.”

Address by the Hon. W. A. HOLMAN, Premier of New South Wales, to members of the War Literature Society, at its inaugural meeting, 23rd September, 1918.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—

I am very much flattered at being asked to give the opening address of this Society. The enormous sphere of usefulness which is before such a Society however can only be exploited if the organisation is non-partisan and non-political. My appearance on the platform is not to be taken as introducing any Party aspect. I still feel that patriotism ought not to be the monopoly of any party in politics. Although we may have in the course of the work of the Society views to put forward, those views will be the views of individuals and sections and not of any official party.

I desire to go over a wide field to-night. I shall make no apology for brevity on each point or abrupt transitions. When a nation is at war its first need is unity. During the first year or eighteen months of the war that unity was achieved. Those of us who have been in politics well recollect there was political discussion, and political dispute, but there was no discussion or dispute about the war. It has been reserved for Australia to realise in the later stages of the struggle that melancholy phenomenon, and it is a matter that should press heavily upon the mind of every patriotic citizen.

Those of us who are strenuously urging the continuing of the war are doing so because we believe it to be the cause of justice, and there is a natural tendency to condemn those who take an opposite view as lacking sympathy for the cause of justice. It is very difficult to refrain from that conclusion sometimes. And yet, a very brief consideration will, I think, prove that it is not just. I have no desire to mention an exciting case at present occupying the public mind, other than by way of

illustration, but if you consider the measure of interest and attention that have been aroused by the alleged miscarriage of justice in the case of the I.W.W. men, it must be admitted, I think, that a large number of those who have associated themselves with the agitation for a further enquiry must have been animated by a genuine desire to see justice done. I know some of the men personally, and I am satisfied that the great bulk of the feeling excited over this case is a feeling in favour of justice and a belief that, in these particular cases, justice has not been achieved. The miscarriage of justice alleged in the I.W.W. cases is perpetrated upon the bodies of twelve working men in Australia. But there is at present being manifested at the other end of the world a brutal indifference to the claims of justice—in this case against many millions of working men. Working men at the other end of the world are being deprived of their liberty—not by being confined in institutions where their lives and health will at least be safe—but by being subjected to treatment, in comparison with which any injustice perpetrated against any persons here dwindles into insignificance. Yet it is a remarkable fact that the very men who are able to lash themselves into a state of uncontrollable excitement over the cases I have referred to regard with complete indifference the enormously greater injustices that are being now perpetrated in Europe.

That is one of the problems whose solution presses upon those who are anxious to see things go better in the future. The explanation, I believe, is simple. The injustice alleged in the case of the I.W.W. men is seen here—it appeals to the senses and the experiences of young Australians. An injustice perpetrated at the other end of the world is not seen here and makes no appeal to Australians—it has never been witnessed by us, and when it is described to us it is described in terms that conjure up no corresponding conceptions, because the experiences narrated have never been undergone in this country. As a result the events that are occurring and have been occurring since the war commenced are not visualised or realised here, and are entirely ignored by vast masses of our fellow citizens.

If you ask why that should be so, I am afraid the answer would involve a problem in psychology too complex for me to enter upon to-night, even if I had the qualifications. But I think the principal reason is that we have learned to depend for our knowledge of what is going on in Europe almost wholly upon the newspapers; and that the press of Australia, admirably organised and very well managed for the task of presenting Australian affairs, has entirely failed to give us an adequate picture of affairs as they stand at the other end of the world. We

get merely isolated incidents—we do not get a complete picture, and I suppose it would be exceedingly difficult for any system of journalism to give us one. We hear of a great battle, of the gallant exploits of one division, or the retreat of another division, we hear of lieutenant this, and captain that, of exciting incidents such as the journalistic mind is qualified to seize upon and depict, but these exciting incidents do not make up any complete picture of what is going on. It is not merely that there are not enough of such incidents, but it is that the real truth does not consist in this kind of thing at all.

The essence of the thing is not to be found in the exploits of individuals or of special bodies of men—it is to be found from day to day and month to month in the relative power developed by the belligerents in the two groups. Now that is a point upon which the press has failed to convey to us any conception of the real position. We hear of victories and occasionally of reverses. We hear that we are going forward or that we are going back. But we do not hear what is the actual situation—whether the power being developed on our side is equal to, or greater or less than that being developed by the enemy. We do not hear what are the reserves or the munition supplies; whether the momentary advances or reverses indicate a permanent adjustment of the forces; or are merely the outcome of some accident. I would venture to give you an experience that has occurred to me several times lately during platform campaigns. I took an active share in the two Referendum campaigns and in the recruiting campaigns. And I found in the midst of the most turbulent meetings that I could get an attentive hearing whenever I attempted to tell my hearers something about the actual facts of the situation. Whilst I talked party talk I was subjected to interruptions; but, when I attempted to talk about the facts of the situation, people listened. They wanted to know, not whether we were going to advance or retreat another five miles, or who had gained the last Military Cross, but what was the actual state of affairs of the two belligerent groups. I found that no matter how disorderly might be the meeting, any effort to deal with the question in that way immediately elicited a measure of quite respectful attention. It obviously fitted into a want making itself felt in the minds of my hearers—a want which the existing methods of supplying information had failed to satisfy. It seems to me that the whole failure of Australia to take its full share in the struggle is due primarily to this one cause—failure to visualise the struggle.

It is not due to any native lack of imagination—there are none more keen than Australians to depict any familiar struggles,

like those of sport or politics, in their most vivid colours—it is due to the circumstances that the actual facts of the war have not found any place in the minds of our people. The first business of this Society, it seems to me, should be to try and bring before our people these actual facts as distinguished from the incidents—the exciting incidents—which make good reading under scare headings in the newspapers. What we want to know is the sum total of the facts of the position.

The first point I feel that the Society should devote itself to is the position of those among us who describe themselves as pacifists. Here there comes in the one theme which I can claim to speak upon with some measure of qualification. I have been for 20 years a pacifist. I am a pacifist to-day. I do know something about the pacifist and his position. I will venture to put a few things forward which must be taken into consideration in dealing with his position. He is not looking forward to an ultimate blending of the races of the world into one amalgam—the British are to continue to be British, the French are to continue to be French, and so on. The pacifist thinks nationally. But he insists that instead of settling international disputes by war they must be settled in another way—by forming treaties.

What is to be done if when a dispute has arisen and has been dealt with by forming a treaty, the treaty is not observed? That is the problem which has confronted the pacifist from the very beginning. It has been dealt with, for example, by Stuart Mill. Clearly, if you are to have a pacifist world your international relations must be governed by treaty. And you can only secure the sanctity of treaties by an honest agreement amongst the majority of a league of nations to stand loyally by each other and to punish any party to a treaty guilty of its infringement. You must bring some form of punishment to bear. Able thinkers like Mill have tried to devise forms of punishment which would not actually involve going to war. It may be that in a more advanced degree of civilisation we can devise a form of punishment which will not necessitate a resort to arms. But, in the present state of the world's progress we cannot.

If a treaty is made and broken it is essential that the other nations should unite to punish the wrongdoer. That is apparently overlooked by the pacifists in Australia. The problem is not the making of an agreement between England and Germany, or between Belgium and Germany. That has been done long ago. The problem is not that of entering upon negotiations which will get us peace through the medium of a treaty. All that has been done. The problem is to get the treaty kept when

made. The only question is what are we going to do when it is made and wantonly broken.

The treaty was made in 1839, when five guaranteeing powers undertook to protect the neutrality of Belgium. It was renewed at the time of the Franco-Prussian War, and at the time of the Hague Convention, in 1912, when it was agreed that the territory of neutral powers should be held inviolable. The signatories of these treaties included Germany. So that on three separate occasions a treaty was made by Germany. Everyone of these treaties definitely bound Germany to abstain from any infringement of Belgian neutrality. So far as the aim of the pacifists is concerned it was secured in this portion of Europe. Its fate was provided for in accordance with the declared method of the pacifist—the entry of adjoining powers into treaties with each other. Then the treaty was broken immediately after the war commenced.

It has always seemed to me that this phase of the question presents a problem unanswerable by any pacifist. What are we as pacifists going to do? Are we going to stand by, with folded arms, and see treaties broken and the wrongdoer escape without punishment for his wrongful acts until finally he may break whatever treaty he may have with us? Or are we going to support and protect the nations guaranteed under any treaty we may make? Clearly we must devote ourselves to the promulgation of much greater knowledge of the diplomatic situation which preceded the war. It needs the application of force to see that the law is observed and that the force is applied by the civilised powers of the world. (Applause.) Now that is the first point upon which there is room for greater general knowledge.

The next point will be to present the actual military situation as it is to-day. I speak without any pretence to any military knowledge of that situation. I simply deal with it as we see it on the map at the present time. There is a feeling abroad that if the present success on the Western front continues, then in a comparatively little while we may compel Germany to evacuate Belgium and Northern France, compel her even to withdraw from Alsace-Lorraine, and secure some advantage for Italy on her northern frontier; and that having done these things the purposes of the war will have been achieved, rendering it wise to take some steps which will bring about an enduring peace. This is, I believe, quite wrong—most dangerously so.

The essential fact about the present situation is the general collapse of the Russian Empire. German diplomacy and arms

have carved out a series of principalities on Russia's western frontier which are, and will continue to be, independent States; and which are already drawn into the general orbit of Germany's and Austria's gravitational power. The putting forward of ready-made German monarchs for these new principalities is in rapid progress and in a comparatively short space of time we shall see these western States of old Russia the admitted satellites of the Central Powers. The total area which has been detached from the Russian nation is about 430,000 square miles—roughly, as large as Germany and Austria put together. The total population of these detached parts of the Russian Empire is estimated at about 55 millions.

It is difficult to get the exact figures of to-day, amidst the prevailing chaos, but I understand 55 million is a conservative estimate. This area is divided into five or six separate political units and in each of them the power and influence of the Central Powers are now supreme. If, therefore, by any arrangement whatever Germany and Austria could escape from the present struggle retaining their hold over this portion of what was once Russia, they will leave the struggle with an enormous increase in the military power with which they entered it. The population of Germany and Austria is about 120,000,000. Adding Turkey and Bulgaria we get a total of 145,000,000. If, when the war is over, by the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine, and the Trentino the total population were reduced by 5,000,000, but Germany and Austria were able to draw in the Russian states, the Central Powers would have a population of about 200,000,000, which would soon become as efficient in industry and war as the rest of the German trained population to-day—an efficiency which we have known to our cost during the past 20 years. It is quite evident that if that scheme succeeds and the present dynasties remain in Germany and Austria, the peace of the world would be confronted with an enormously greater danger after the war than at the beginning of it. They would have reserves of practically unlimited character. On this question I would quote you two passages. The first is from a witness not subject to hysteria or to illusion. It is from President Wilson's speech. He says:—

“The purpose (of the Central Powers) is undoubtedly to make all the Slavic peoples, all the free and ambitious nations of the Baltic Peninsula, all the lands that Turkey has dominated and misruled, subject to their will and ambition, and build upon that dominion an empire of force upon which they fancy that they can then erect an empire of gain and

commercial supremacy—an empire as hostile to the Americans as to the Europe which it will overawe—an empire which will ultimately master Persia, India, and the peoples of the Far East. In such a programme our ideals, the ideals of justice and humanity and liberty, the principle of the free self-determination of nations upon which all the modern world insists, can play no part. They are rejected for the ideals of power, for the principle that the strong must rule the weak, that trade must follow the flag whether those to whom it is taken welcome it or not, that the peoples of the world are to be made subject to the patronage and overlordship of those who have the power to enforce it.

“That programme once carried out, America and all who care or dare to stand with her must arm and prepare themselves to contest the mastery of the world, a mastery in which the rights of common men, the rights of women, and of all who are weak, must for the time being be trodden underfoot and disregarded, and the old age-long struggle for freedom and right begin again at its beginning. Everything that America has lived for and loved and grown great to vindicate and bring to a glorious realisation will have fallen in utter ruin, and the gates of mercy be once more pitilessly shut upon mankind.”

So far as I am capable of forming an independent opinion, my own consideration of the position has led me to that view. I accept the conclusions that President Wilson indicates there, and I think that his conclusions should be made freely known. But the obtaining of this vast area of Russia will not only strengthen the military resources of Germany and Austria, but will also strengthen them economically. In the *North American Review* there recently appeared an article in which the author points out the following:—

(1) Germany now controls both the oil-fields in Roumania and at Baku, which seriously competed with American oil, together with the finest deposit of manganese in the world.

(2) Germany now controls wheat lands among the richest upon earth, wheat lands which, including southern Siberia, vie even in area with our own wheat-growing zone.

(3) Germany now controls the one great untouched timber-zone remaining in the world, stretching right across Siberia.

(4) Germany controls the vast leather-producing area which runs across Central Russia and Siberia.

(5) Germany now controls immensely valuable mining zones, containing everything from iron to gold, running from the Don Valley to Ussuria.

(6) Germany now controls, in the Urals, practically the whole of the world's supply of platinum, quite indispensable to our electrical industries.

That is about where we stand, thanks to socialism and its faithful support of German policies.

That is the position, and the minds of the Allies must be attuned to the necessity of continuing the struggle not merely to restore Belgium and Northern France and North Italy, but to prevent our enemies leaving the war with these enormous accessions of power. Knowledge of those points is practically non-existent in the regions of which I am thinking—in the camps of those who describe themselves as pacifists, who have failed to take proper interest in the struggle going on to-day. Those are the first two points to which I suggest we should direct our efforts.

The next point, I think, is to explain to our people, and particularly to our women, the nature of the war being carried on by Germany at present and the methods upon which Germany is relying. A veil has been drawn over these, necessarily, and I am far from suggesting that it should be wholly lifted, but I think it should be lifted sufficiently to convey to the minds of our people some idea of what has been done. As an instance of the need for this I might mention that recently in the House, I heard a member of the Opposition—and one whom I respect highly—say, in connection with some alleged grievance of a tram conductor in connection with his employment, "Could anything worse be done in Belgium?" This gentleman was bringing forward a case of apparently real hardship. Apparently he thought that this type of hardship was the very worst that was happening in Belgium to-day!

We have to-day the spectacle of a great military power which avowedly commits itself to the use of military force to the uttermost—without limit and without scruple. It is hard for us to realise what is meant by the employment of military force without limit and without scruple. It means a force against which there is no protection of any kind for an invaded or subjugated people, against the utmost excesses of cruelty or wrong, except that which may be suggested by the interest of the conquerors themselves. The whole matter was very accurately summed up at the time of the Franco-German War by a British

observer, Sir Edward Hamley, who wrote a letter to the *London Times* in 1871, in which he indicated what he took to be the German position. He said:—

“The ‘laws of war,’ as promulgated by the Prussians, may be condensed, in the case of invasion, into the general axiom that the population of the invaded country lose their rights of property and of personal security, while the persons and effects of the invaders become absolutely sacred. In practice, this takes the two distinct forms of the law of requisition and the law of penalty for resistance. Every species of moveable property which any district held by the invader contains, is subject to the demands of the commander of the troops that occupy it. This property is liable to be transported to particular points by the horses and vehicles of the inhabitants, which always form an important item in the booty. The penalty for non-compliance or tardy compliance with a requisition, is a pecuniary fine. For the payment of this, the chief inhabitants are seized as hostages. The town or village, the inhabitants of which protect their property, is to be burnt. The town or village, in which invading troops have suffered themselves to be surprised is to be burnt. The district in which damage is done to bridges, roads, or railways, is to be fined or devastated. The inhabitants who do the damage are to be put to death. Everybody taken with arms and not wearing a recognised uniform is to be put to death. All these things, are they not written in the orders issued by Prussian chiefs, and have not these orders been punctually executed?”

“In ordinary cases, to confiscate property by force, to burn buildings and stores, and to put people to death, for reasons such as those quoted, are acts bearing names which need not be mentioned. It is difficult to say why these acts should lose their character if committed by invaders. And it is to be observed that the enforcement of these laws of war is not merely the annulling of ordinary law, but the inversion of it. For whereas a man in all peaceful countries is entitled and encouraged to defend his own property and person, while he who assails them does so at his own proper risk, in this case defence suddenly becomes a crime, to be visited by the extremest penalties, and it is the aggressor who is to be protected by laws of extraordinary severity. . . .”

These are the observations of a very penetrating mind during the Franco-Prussian War. These principles probably have been

developed and improved upon in the 40 years past and have been applied with the most convincing logic in the present war. The attitude of the German official mind apparently is that as ultimately Germany is bound to win, anybody who resists is a criminal and an offender against mankind. He is merely protracting the struggle, while any cruelty which shortens the struggle is a service to the higher humanity; thus those who are resisters lose all their rights. This is apparently the philosophy upon which these things are based.

The French Government have, from time to time, issued volumes in which have been collected the evidence of some of the typical outrages that have been committed by the Germans in their advance through the northern regions of France. Some have been obtained after the evacuation. Others from fugitives who have escaped from the occupied regions and got back to the Allied lines. Similar reports have been issued in regard to typical outrages in Belgium. We know only about a small portion of the territory. We do not know what is going on behind the German lines. The bulk of the evidence is of a character making it impossible to convey it in anything but general terms to the public. But I will read two or three remarkable cases. In all of these cases the names of the witnesses are given—except in the case of women witnesses who have been victims—for obvious reasons the names of women witnesses are not given. The nature of the inquiries made is disclosed and there are photographs. There can be no doubt about the general accuracy of these statements.

Case No. 31, for instance, relates to a police report concerning a murder and two outrages committed near La Ferte-Gaucher (Seine-et-Marne).

"On Sunday, the 6th instant, the Germans went to the house of M. Q——, owner of the Chateau de la ——, Commune of La Ferte-Gaucher, where they lunched. In the evening they returned intoxicated; they then violated the young woman Y—— and Madam X——, agriculturalist, who had taken refuge at the Chateau. Seeing this, M. Q—— fired a revolver at them, without hitting them, whereupon they immediately shot him dead.

"I cannot give the details of this scene, as I was myself taken prisoner by the Germans the evening before."
(Signed, Larieux.)

Then there are details of the outraging of the young women and a further statement by Madam X.

Case 32 is a Police report concerning the murder of a young girl of Esternay (Marne) by a German soldier.

"During the battle of Esternay, September 6, 1914, I had taken refuge in the basement of my house, together with Madam Lhomme, the widowed Madam Bouche and her two daughters. About 11 p.m., after my house had been already occupied for some time by the enemy, three German soldiers came down into the basement. There they drank and took all they chose, and finally they discovered us in a kind of smaller cellar in which we had taken refuge.

"As this inner cellar was very small, Madam Bouche and I, standing at the entrance, filled it up entirely. Madam Lhomme and Madam Bouche's two daughters were seated behind us. One of the soldiers took me by the arm and brought me out of the cellar, saying: "We won't hurt grandmother." The other two placed themselves at the entrance of the cellar and ordered the other women, in bad French, to take off their clothes. Seeing that no one stirred, one of the soldiers pointed his gun at the women. Madam Bouche, still standing at the entrance, threw up the muzzle of the gun with her arm, but the soldier then put it under Madam Bouche's arm and fired.

"Madam Lhomme, wounded in the left elbow and Mlle. Bouche, wounded in the shoulder, screamed, and the soldiers then ran away. The one who was at the entrance of the cellar but who had not fired went up last, walking backwards and covering us with his revolver.

"Madam Lhomme's wound has healed; Mlle. Bouche died on the following day. I do not know to which regiment these soldiers belonged."

Then there is corroborative evidence by other witnesses there, whose statements are given. We then have a statement made by a German prisoner whose name is suppressed, but whose statement is authenticated.

"We broke into a house at Metten. Shots had been fired from a house. We broke into a house, and we were ordered to search the house, but we found nothing in the house but two women and a child. But my comrades said that the two women had fired, and we found some arms, too, revolvers. But I did not see the women fire. But the women were told nothing would be done to them, because they were crying so bitterly. We brought the women out and took them to the major, and then we were ordered to shoot

the women. When the mother was dead the major gave the order to shoot the child, so that the child should not be left alone in the world, and when the mother was shot the child was still holding her hand, and as she fell she pulled the child over with her. The child's eyes were bandaged. I have written the truth. I took part in this because we were ordered to do it."

There are extracts from the pocket-books found upon German prisoners. One reads thus:—

"At Leffe, nineteen civilians shot. Women begging for mercy as we marched towards the Meuse.

"Ten more men have been shot. The King having directed the people to defend the country by all possible means, we have received orders to shoot the entire male population.

"At Dinant about 100 men or more were huddled together and shot. A horrible Sunday."

Here is an extract from the note-book of Private Hohl, dated August 25:—

"On the march we passed through Versse. Thirty-five dead civilians are still lying outside the village. They had attacked German soldiers at night, led by the Parish priest. This priest gave the signal by ringing the church bell, and this was why the order was given to shoot them down."

There are innumerable other instances relating to the murder of civilians and the burning down of houses. An extract from the note-book of Private Philipp, reads:—

"At the entrance to the village lay about fifty dead civilians, shot for having fired upon our troops from ambush. In the course of the night many others were also shot, so that we counted over 200. Women and children, lamp in hand, were forced to look on at the horrible scene. We ate our rice later in the midst of the corpses, for we had had nothing since morning."

And so it goes on. There is a continuous record of the violation of the women of the country, and massacres of the general population, including priests, and an absolute indifference to any distinction between those who had actually resisted and those who had not. The mere suspicion was enough. Here is a more lengthy statement from which I shall read one short extract. This is given by a police officer who was an eye-witness.

"From the 15th to the 20th of August, Nomeny was the centre of military operations. . . . After the 20th

August, the surviving inhabitants continued to live in their cellars without food. If any of them went out to seek provisions the German soldiers killed them. Whether by night or by day those who ventured out were fired upon. But even before the 20th August the German soldiers had already begun to put peaceful civilians to death. . . . But after the 20th August arson and looting became matters of everyday occurrence, no doubt because the French patrols had retired. . . .

"M. Charvin, a Municipal Councillor, was acting as Mayor. After compelling M. Charvin to accompany them while they burned and looted the houses of his district, the German soldiers killed him, shooting him just as he was entering his residence. . . . A number of the inhabitants were killed in the streets, some inside their houses, some in the fields and some in their beds. For the most part the victims were old men, women and children. Speaking from personal recollection I am able to give the names of several people murdered in this way.

"Jean-Pierre Adam was thrown alive into the fire by the German soldiers. As he did not burn quickly enough to please them they finished him off with rifle shots. . . . Another man named Conrart, 72 years of age, was killed in his bed. . . . At least 150 were killed by the Germans; only two houses were left standing."

These are only a few cases. The last one struck me as a singularly distressing case. But there are many volumes of such instances.

It seems to me the special value of evidence of that kind lies in its application to the proposition, only too current in our midst, that our own organisation for defence should be based upon the idea of fighting the enemy in our own country. No one who reads the evidence I have quoted will doubt that where war is forced upon us the first duty we owe to our civil population is to carry on war as far from our own country as possible.

I come now to another matter which I think must be made more widely known. It is the attitude of the democrats and Labor men of the world towards the war and towards the efforts which are being put forward to end it by a premature peace. Here there is an enormous field for better education. I have two or three extracts from the *Times* reports of the last British Labor Conference but one. I want to read two or three extracts from their decisions. They say:—

"The fundamental purpose of the British Labor movement in supporting the continuance of the struggle is that the world may henceforth be made safe for democracy."

They have adopted the formula of President Wilson there.

The Labor Party of Great Britain ask for a permanent peace. They said:—

"Once the conditions of a permanent peace can be secured, the war should not be continued for a single day merely for the sake of extending the boundaries of any State.

"For the purpose of removing any obvious cause of future international conflict, certain territorial readjustments are required, but they must be arrived at by common agreement on the general principle of allowing all people to settle their own destinies.

"To Belgium there must be reparation by Germany, payments for damage, and restoration of complete independence.

"The inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine must freely decide what shall be their future political position. The Balkans should form a federation of independent States according to predominant nationalities.

"The claim of people of Italian blood 'left outside' the Italian boundaries to be united with their own race is supported, but Imperialist aims of conquest are repudiated.

"Poland and Luxembourg are to settle their own destinies.

"Palestine should be a free State for Jews, under international guarantee.

"Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Arabia should be administered by a commission under the League of Nations.

"The colonies of the European Powers in tropical Africa should be transferred to the League of Nations and permanently neutralised as a single independent African State."

Those were the aims of the Labor movement of Great Britain. In the *London Times* of next day it read:—

"Several hundreds of delegates were present, wielding in all about 3,400,000 votes, and their assent to the declaration, according to Mr. J. W. Ogden, the Chairman was given practically unanimously."

None of those things are to be obtained by negotiation. The restoration of Belgium and the freedom of the other oppressed nations can only be obtained by the defeat of the Central Powers, and the British Labor Movement declares itself in favour of

continuing the struggle until these things have been secured. So far, the British Labor Party's attitude has apparently not been understood by some of their Labor confrères in Australia. The name of Ramsay Macdonald has been cited as that of a Pacifist in the sense of one urging the commencement of negotiations for peace. He said:—

"For the war to end in a patched-up peace would be one of the greatest crimes and one of the greatest errors of which any Government has been guilty. I do not resist for a single moment either in my heart or with my lips the statement that the war has got to be finished. To me 'finished' means the gaining of those political ends which you want as a result of the war."

On another occasion he said:—

"I say perfectly definitely that the country, if it retains any shred of honor at all, cannot accept a peace, unless peace is forced upon it, which means the sacrifice of Belgian sovereignty to any extent. If Germany imagines there is any section of the country that is prepared to accept peace at the sacrifice of any portion of Belgian sovereignty, then the sooner German public opinion is disabused of that delusion the better."

Even if it were believed that Mr. Ramsay Macdonald does not say these things sincerely it is still apparent that he finds it essential to do so in order to retain his position as a leader in the Labor Movement in the Old Country. I believe he says them earnestly, and it is perfectly clear that that is the view of the great mass of those who are leaders in the Labor Movement in Great Britain to-day.

In America the situation is the same. I will read an extract from the Declaration of the American Alliance of Labor and Democracy which met at Minneapolis. They said:—

"We declare our abhorrence of war and our devotion to the cause of peace, but we recognise that there are evils greater and more intolerable than war. We declare that war waged for evil ends must be met by war waged for an altruistic end. Peace bought by the surrender of every principle vital to democracy is no peace, but shameful servility. . . .

"We declare that the one overshadowing issue is the preservation of democracy. Either democracy will endure and men be free, or autocracy will triumph and men be enslaved. On this prime issue we take our stand."

That is the Labor World of America.

In France, the Labor forces are equally overwhelming in the same attitude. As I understand the rather complex position of the French Socialists, there is a Majority and a Minority. The latter consists of two small groups, one of which is animated by a spirit of animosity towards the present Premier, while the other is avowedly Pacifist. But the Majority are steadily supporting the Government, just as the Labor Movement is in America and Great Britain to-day.

Those are matters in connection with the Labor Movement of the world which it behoves us to make better known amongst those who are associated with the Labor Movement of Australia. The Labor man to-day is a democrat. He is guided by the majority. He cannot deny while the country is at war that the majority is in favor of it. If, however, he says: "I take no notice of the political ties making up a country, I recognise only the economic ties of class and the solidarity of labor," he cannot escape from the fact that the immense majority of the laboring classes all over the civilised world are in favor of the vigorous prosecution of the war. Those of us who wish to appeal to the democratic sentiment of Australia are bound to bring forward the fact that not only is there a majority in the Empire in favor of going on with the war, but also an overwhelming majority in favor of the same thing amongst the organised labor of the whole civilised world. On this point I ask your patience while I read a short extract from a recent article by Mr. Chesterton in the *North American Review*. In this article Chesterton says:—

"Now it is simply a fact, like death or daylight, that the English people, and especially the English proletariat, regards the German of this war exactly as it regarded the Whitechapel murderer, who ripped up poor girls with a knife. Seeing that the German also, as it happens, has ripped up poor girls with a knife, the parallelism of the sentiment is not perhaps so surprising. The English proletarians desired to find the Whitechapel murderer and punish him; the English proletarians also desire to find the Germans who commanded these German atrocities and punish them. This is the will of the people, if the will of the people ever existed in this world."

He puts the matter in this way:—

"The things which the English" (and he means the English workers) "denounce are not the things the Germans deny, but the things they cannot deny. The violent perjury which waged war on a people who had grown up unarmed under a permanent promise of peace, may have been a mere

modification of modern diplomatic methods, but there is no doubt that the Germans did it, and no doubt that the English detested it. The launching of enormous airships, useless against armies and useful only to create panic by the killing of civilians, may be only a little artistic touch added to the latest scientific armament; but there is no doubt that these machines were regarded with admiration in Germany and with horror in England. The scuttling of poor little boats plying peaceful and ordinary trades may be a mere alteration of detail in international arrangements; but even the Germans will not deny that the English are shocked by it. Here there is no possible question of diplomatic distortions or travellers' tales; the facts are admitted, and, in the English popular view, the facts are final."

In the Allied countries the workers, the democrats, are, with the exception of an eccentric few overwhelmingly united in favor of the prosecution of the war. They show it in every way they can. It is only in Australia that a feeling has sprung into existence in certain quarters that a Labor man ought to be against the farther prosecution of the war. That is not the situation of the Labor man in France, Great Britain, Italy, or America; but it is the situation here.

What is the position of the laboring man in the provinces at present occupied by the Germans cannot be made adequately clear because we have no official information upon it; but that many thousands of working men and women have been carried off from the occupied provinces and subjected to slavery in Germany is beyond all dispute.

The precise nature of the conditions under which the slavery has been imposed can only be made known when the war is ended; but the broad fact is there. It is, as I say, to stop a war which is being carried on by these methods that the civilised countries of the world are called upon to unite to-day; and it is that call which we, the people of Australia, have either got to respond to, or, if we choose, be deaf to. It is for us to say. If in a sparsely populated portion of the Australian bush a man told his neighbours that his house had been burned down his daughter violated, his sons killed, and his wife carried away, and called upon his neighbours to help him against the aggressors, there is, I venture to say, no man in Australia who would deny the absolute duty of every man within reach and physically capable to put everything else aside until justice had been done. (Applause.) But then the thing would appeal to the senses—it would be a personal experience and there would be no doubt as to what should be done.

It is easily possible for any man in Australia to so absorb himself in his daily affairs as to close his eyes to the evils which are being perpetrated all over the world to-day. We must find some means of impressing upon the more inert part of the population what is going on at this moment—that ships are being torpedoed indiscriminately, peaceful cities bombed from the air, hospitals blown up, civilian populations carried off into slavery, and women treated in this very moment, probably while we sit here talking of it, as I described. Although this is going on in France and Belgium and Servia and Poland, it is as real as if done in the centre of George-street. And this kind of warfare will be carried on all over the world if Germany and Austria succeed in their present campaign. Having established themselves in Belgium and France, they will push on into Great Britain, into the United States and into Australia. And they will punish as a crime any resistance with unremitted cruelty, as they have done in the countries which are the present scenes of hostilities.

This represents a new epoch in warfare, a new shade of tragedy which has come to darken the outlook of the human race, unless it can be resisted. We shall have it in perpetuity—one horror upon another. It is not this struggle which will exhaust German ambition. She aims at conquering the whole world by her brutal methods; the use of force, without limit or scruple, which has been so extraordinarily displayed during the four years of this war. We are called upon, not as Australians or as members of the British Empire, but as members of the civilised community of men, as neighbours, to do our share in putting an end to the crime perpetrated to-day, and bring sharp justice to bear upon the criminals. (Applause.)

